

Chapter 1. Introduction

PURPOSE OF THE FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

This final environmental impact report (EIR) has been prepared to respond to agency and public comments received on the draft EIR on the proposed general waste discharge requirements for biosolids land application (the General Order, or GO). The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), as lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), is required to prepare a final EIR that responds to all environmental comments received on the draft EIR.

CEQA REQUIREMENTS

The content and format of this final EIR meet the requirements of CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines (Section 15132), which require that a final EIR consist of:

- # the draft EIR or a revision of the draft EIR (the draft EIR is hereby incorporated by reference);
- # comments and recommendations received on the draft EIR, either verbatim or in summary (Chapter 3 contains the 53 comment letters received and a summary of the oral comments made at the public hearings);
- # a list of persons, organizations, and public agencies commenting on the draft EIR (in Chapter 3);
- # the responses of the lead agency to significant environmental points raised in the review and consultation process (in Chapter 3); and
- # any other information added by the lead agency (Chapter 2).

A lead agency is required to recirculate an EIR when significant new information is added to the EIR after public notice is given of the availability of the draft EIR for public review but before the EIR is certified. Such information can include changes to the project or environmental setting, as well as additional data. New information added to an EIR is not considered significant unless the EIR is changed in a way that deprives the public of a meaningful opportunity to comment on a substantial adverse environmental effect of the project or a feasible way to mitigate or avoid such

an effect (including a feasible project alternative) that the project proponents have declined to implement.

The SWRCB has added new information to the draft EIR to provide additional detail on implementation of the proposed GO, clarify analysis and background information, and include additional measures in the proposed GO to further minimize impacts based on public input. The revisions to the proposed GO, described below under “Minor Modifications to the General Order” do not meet the criteria for recirculation because the changes do not introduce new, significant environmental issues or deprive the public of a meaningful opportunity to comment on a feasible mitigation measure that the SWRCB declines to implement. Therefore, recirculation of the document is not required. Appendix A provides a copy of the proposed GO.

MINOR MODIFICATIONS TO THE GENERAL ORDER

Since the publication of the draft EIR, minor modifications have been made to the proposed GO to respond to public comments. Additional changes were made to further protect air quality, refine the definitions of “high potential for public exposure” and “low potential for public exposure”, add a definition for “grower”, allow for salmonella testing once more sensitive methods are approved by the EPA, more clearly describe how soil background is addressed, and reduce erosion (related to provisions for structures conveying tailwater). These minor changes do not result in any significant impacts that were not previously disclosed in the draft EIR.

PUBLIC REVIEW

The draft EIR was published on June 28, 1999, and circulated for a 72-day public review period. Copies of the draft EIR were available at 18 public libraries, and the executive summary of the draft EIR was available on the Internet. The SWRCB held five public hearings to receive comments on the draft EIR: two meetings were held each in Palmdale on August 16, 1999, and Bakersfield on August 17, 1999, and one meeting was held in Sacramento on August 23, 1999. Transcripts of these meetings and responses to comments raised at the meetings are provided in Chapter 4, “Comments and Responses to Comments”. The public review period closed on September 10, 1999.

This document and the draft EIR, which has been circulated separately, constitute the final EIR. Copies of the draft EIR and additional copies of the final EIR are available by contacting Todd Thompson at the SWRCB (at the address provided on the title page of this document). A copy of the final EIR has been provided to all those who commented on the draft EIR.

As lead agency, the SWRCB must certify that the final EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA and that the SWRCB has reviewed and considered the information

contained in the final EIR before approving the project. The SWRCB will consider the final EIR for certification in August 2000.

FORMAT OF THE FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

In addition to this introduction, this final EIR contains the following chapters:

- # Chapter 2, “Master Responses to Frequent Comments”, provides in-depth information to supplement or clarify information in the draft EIR in response to comments that were raised by multiple commenters during the public comment period.
- # Chapter 3, “Comments and Responses to Comments”, contains the letters submitted to the SWRCB during the public comment period and transcripts of the public hearings. Several comment letters were submitted with supporting literature and articles. Supporting information was not reproduced in this document and can be obtained by contacting Todd Thompson at the SWRCB (at the address provided on the title page of this document) (specifically for comment letters from Kern Food Growers Against Sludge [letter 26] and Greenberg Glusker Fields Claman & Machtinger LLP [letter 40]). Responses are provided to significant environmental points raised during the public review process on the draft EIR. Each comment letter is included in this chapter, followed by responses to comments contained in that letter. Comments received at the public meetings are addressed at the end of the written comments. This chapter also identifies comment letters that were received after the comment period. These letters were reviewed; however, detailed responses were not provided for these letters.
- # Chapter 4, “Revisions to the Draft EIR”, contains a summary of revisions to the text of the draft EIR to update sections of the original document. This chapter is structured as errata to the draft report and can be inserted into the draft EIR to provide a complete record of the final text of the EIR.
- # Chapter 5, “Citations”, contains information on all printed references and personal communications referred to in this final EIR.
- # Chapter 6, “List of Preparers”, identifies the organizations and people who prepared the draft and final EIR.

This final EIR also includes Appendix A, “General Order”, the revised text of the proposed GO; Appendix B, “Revised Draft EIR Public Health Technical Appendix E”; and Appendix C, a revised version of the Mitigation Monitoring Program, Table 15-1, from the draft EIR.